

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Claims 1-5, drawn to a non-elected invention, have been cancelled.

In claim 7, line 2, "cascade" has been deleted and after "columns" , - - arranged in cascade - - has been inserted.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Alan E. Schiavelli on May 1, 2008.

Prior to the first line of the first page of the specification, the following has been inserted:

- - Reference to Related Applications

This application is a 371 of PCT/FR04/01653 filed June 28, 2004 - - .

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: Margraff (U.S. Patent No. 6,913,692) is considered to be the closest art because it discloses a similar apparatus. The case has been allowed because the recited combination of elements would not have been obvious from Margraff (U.S. Patent No. 6,913,692).

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to E. Therkorn at telephone number (571) 272-1149. The official fax number is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Ernest G. Therkorn/
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EGT
May 1, 2008